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RUEHBW/AMEMBASSY BELGRADE 0399  
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RUEHUP/AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST 0491  
RUEHCH/AMEMBASSY CHISINAU 0227  
RUEHLJ/AMEMBASSY LJUBLJANA 0549  
RUEHVJ/AMEMBASSY SARAJEVO 0040  
RUEHSQ/AMEMBASSY SKOPJE 1920  
RUEHTI/AMEMBASSY TIRANA 1086  
RUEHVB/AMEMBASSY ZAGREB 0935

UNCLAS SOFIA 001661

SIPDIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (FIXED PARA NUMBERS)

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR/PGI ALAIN NORMAN, EUR/ACE DAVID HODGKINSON,  
INL ELIZABETH CARROLL AND CHRISTINE CLINE;  
EMBASSY BUCHAREST FOR QUINN ANDRUS  
DOJ/OPDAT FOR ALEXANDRE, EHRENSTAMM, ACKER  
DOJ/ICITAP FOR TREVILIAN, THOMAS, DUCOT

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [KCRM](#) [EAID](#) [KJUS](#) [KCOR](#) [SNAR](#) [KPAO](#) [BU](#)

SUBJECT: ANTI-OC TRAINING CENTER: BULGARIA READY TO HOST

REF: STATE 193421

¶1. (SBU) Introduction and Summary: Mission strongly supports establishment of a South Eastern European Regional Organized Crime Training Center (SEEROCTC). We believe a center located in Bulgaria will advance U.S. rule of law objectives here and regionally. A center in Bulgaria would build on an existing USG-led program. With initial U.S. funding and direction, we can shape the center in terms of Bulgarian and regional capacity building, programs and curricula, and management structure and internal controls. With the participation of all Southeastern European Cooperative Initiative (SECI) member states, the center will use a standardized curriculum of the world's best practices and a "train-the-trainer" approach to develop a self-sustaining group of regional anti-OC trainers. We have requested considerable USG funds for other rule of law programs, and we recognize it is a lot to ask for additional monies for this center. We are nonetheless convinced that to upgrade GOB's capacity ) from law enforcement through prosecutors to magistrates ) we need to target effectively each of the components. Hence this request for additional funds.

¶2. (SBU) The Bulgarian government (through the Interior Ministry) is budgeting approximately 500,000 leva (approximately USD 330,000) of its own resources for the center; it is confident it can secure 1.5 million euros from the European Transition Facility Fund for the center. We have spoken with several EU member state embassies here about supporting the center; they are positive (though cannot yet confirm any funding commitments) about the need and importance of a regional center that builds law enforcement capacity. The MOI assures us that the center will operate, with or without U.S. financing. But a U.S. contribution will

set the charter, scope, direction and management for the center. Post seeks two years of USG funding of \$450,000/year to jump-start the project and provide support for two U.S. experts to develop the center before handing it over to the GOB.

13. (SBU) Establishing the center in Bulgaria be a major step toward a more effective and unified approach to fighting organized crime in South Eastern Europe and would strengthen Bulgaria's own rule-of-law regime, a major goal for the mission. This center would not compete with ILEA (which has a different mandate) nor with SECI's Bucharest center (which has a different focus). Rather, the organized crime training center would supplement and complement those other institutions and build regional capacity and cooperation in what is a burgeoning regional problem. End introduction and summary.

14. (U) Answers are keyed to the questions in reftel.

15. (U) Institution's current capability of offering standardized training on fighting organized crime through enhanced international cooperation.

-- (SBU) SEEROCTC would expand the work currently done by the Regional Criminal Justice Initiative's (RCJI) Anti-Organized Crime Project. RCJI's established curriculum trains Bulgarian investigators, prosecutors, and judges in the theory and practice of fighting organized crime (OC). To date, 78 law enforcement personnel have completed the Anti-OC Project's initial course on investigation and will return in the first part of 2007 to attend more in-depth courses on surveillance, covert activities, use of technology, and the management of undercover operations. RCJI "trains the trainer" to assure program sustainability, and many of the

initial students are already teaching the basics to the incoming classes. SEEROCTC would build on RCJI's foundation to include law enforcement personnel from each SECI member-state. The first group of students would learn the basics from experienced instructors and, as they advance to more specialized courses, would begin teaching the incoming classes. Using this "force multiplier," SEEROCTC would continuously increase the regional base of qualified instructors, expanding its reach and securing sustainability.

16. (U) If not fully capable, how much time, money, or other inputs would be required to achieve this capacity?

-- (SBU) As a result of the groundwork laid by RCJI, the program could become international in scope in a relatively short period of time. At a recent regional Ministers of Interior meeting, all SECI member states agreed to send their personnel to the future training center. Several EU member states have also expressed a willingness to send instructors.

-- (SBU) Initial funding for the program would ideally come from the GOB, the USG, SECI member participants, and the EU. The U.S. would provide 450,000/year for two years for two U.S. experts who would oversee the start-up of the training center. Member-states would contribute in-kind. The GOB is ready to provide 500,000 leva (appr. 330,000 USD) and is working to secure 1.5 million euros (1.9 million USD) from EU funds for SEEROCTC's start-up, to host the center at MOI's National Academy (a fully equipped training facility in Sofia), and to house and train SECI students and instructors at no cost. The completion of a multi-national SEEROC Operating Agreement would require time, but the training center itself can become functional prior to the finalization of the agreement. In fact, getting the center started would go a long way in speeding up the slow pace of international agreements.

17. (U) What is the level of political will/commitment by host government?

-- (SBU) The GOB is fully behind the SEEROCTC concept and

recognizes transnational cooperation as an effective tool against transnational organized crime. Minister of Interior Rumen Petkov and Prosecutor General Boris Velchev have signed a joint statement of support for the center, recognizing that from its inception it will begin a transition to full Bulgarian ownership and support. GOB's resolve is backed by its considerable financial pledge, and the MOI is working on securing the 1.5 million euros from the European Transition Facility Fund.

-- (SBU) The government is ready to host the center at the National Academy in Sofia, a facility that has newly refurbished dormitories, a cafeteria, a library, capacity for multiple language translation, and practical training areas. The GOB has also committed to house and train the students and instructors at no cost; partner nations would only be required to pay for transportation and meals and incidentals.

¶8. (U) How sustainable, in the long term and without USG funding, would SEEROC be?

-- (SBU) Initial USG involvement would establish the foundation of the center's sustainability. The two years of funding would provide for the posting two U.S. experts, TDY experts, and limited equipment donations. During this time, the two experts will assist in establishing a SEEROCTC Advisory Board, developing the center's policies and procedures, broadening the curriculum, and training the next SEEROCTC director. By the end of the two years, the center will establish a core group of SECI member instructors who will continue training future students and increasing the pool of potential instructors. At the same time, the U.S. experts will build up the capacity of the management staff to assure the center's smooth and effective operation once the GOB takes over ownership. Bulgaria also plans to seek additional support from participating members and EU project-driven funding. As the center produces results -- an exponentially increasing number of police, prosecutors, and judges specialized in fighting organized crime -- the GOB bid for EU funds should become stronger.

¶9. (U) How engaged is Embassy Sofia with SEEROCTC?

-- (SBU) The concept of a regional Organized Crime training center is a joint effort between the mission and the GOB. Promoting rule of law is one of the mission's top priorities, and helping Bulgaria battle organized crime is an essential component of that goal. SEEROCTC's concept is the result of close coordination between RCJI, OPDAT, and post in defining the idea, drafting the initial proposal to INL, and molding it into the proposal under consideration. Post recognizes that organized crime is a transnational phenomenon that must be dealt with through a transnational approach. As such, post is committed to supporting the project to establish the center.

¶10. (U) What non-USG entities provide support to the institution?

-- (SBU) The GOB's commitment of 500,000 Euros is the only solid funding for the center. Both post and the GOB are actively engaged with EU counterparts to drum up support. According to the MOI, France, Germany, Italy, Austria, and Spain have already committed to sending their experts to the center.

¶11. (U) What are the political/diplomatic advantages in utilizing the institution in Bulgaria?

-- (SBU) Establishing a regional training center in Bulgaria would go along way in strengthening regional cooperation in fighting organized crime and furthering post's priorities. Bulgaria's leadership recognizes the benefit of modern strategic and operational training in dismantling OC networks. Developing a corps of law enforcement teams specialized in identifying, investigating, and prosecuting organized crime would bring some needed successes. A common history and culture contribute to the good relations Bulgaria

has with its South Eastern European neighbors, a plus for leading a regional Balkan approach to a common problem. Training the participants to a common standard would facilitate greater cooperation and effectiveness, making member-nations better partners against organized criminals. The center would coordinate with and complement existing regional entities, like SECI, ILEA, and TADOC. TADOC could prove a useful partner -- its focus on combating drug trafficking and extensive work with Middle Eastern countries could complement SEEROCTC's Balkan focus. The center would continue the work of many USG initiatives to support and strengthen GOB's efforts against organized crime and promote the rule of law in Bulgaria.

BEYRLE